

Public Workshop #1

Town of Orange

Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)

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November 13, 2024 | 7:00-8:30 PM

High Plains Community Center Cafeteria, 525 Orange Center Rd, Orange, CT 06477

Introduction

The first Public Workshop for the Town of Orange Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update was held on November 13, 2024 at the High Plains Community Center. Approximately 20 members of the public were in attendance. Oscar Parente, Chair of the Town of Orange Plan and Zoning Commission (P & Z) introduced the Special Meeting and fellow Commission members. Representatives of BFJ Planning then gave a presentation on the POCD process, facilitated an interactive exercise, and ended with a question-and-answer session.



Presentation

Frank Fish of BFJ Planning began the presentation by introducing the project team, composed of staff from the Town's Planning and Zoning Department and BFJ Planning. He then gave an overview of the public meeting agenda, explaining that after the presentation, attendees will be invited to participate in an interactive visioning exercise and then ask questions in a town hall format.

What is a POCD?

Mr. Fish described the purpose of the meeting by first explaining the concept of a POCD. State law requires municipalities to update POCDs at least every 10 years. POCDs are not law, but instead act as a Town-wide framework for plans, initiatives, and investments. POCDs lay the groundwork for decisions on the zoning code, capital budget, and general policy. They can also assist the Town by acting as a "to-do list" for the Town to track implementation of short-, medium, and long-term goals. A POCD is intended to be an expression of the community's shared vision for the future.

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Project Overview: POCD Timeline

Suzanne Goldberg of BFJ Planning then presented the project timeline, highlighting key opportunities for public input, including a tentative second Public Workshop in March and Public Hearing in June. The Final Plan is expected to be adopted by the end of September 2025, following the State's 65-day review period.

Proposed POCD Plan Chapters

Ms. Goldberg presented the proposed POCD chapters, which include:

- Introduction, Vision, and Goals
- Demographic and Socioeconomic Trends (Orange Today)
- Built Environment: Land Use and Zoning
- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Economic Development
- Transportation and Mobility
- Quality of Life (Historic, Cultural, and Parks)
- Infrastructure (Community Systems, Sustainability, and Resilience)
- Future Land Use Plan and Implementation

Stakeholder Meetings

Ms. Goldberg described a key component of the community engagement process which is already underway. Over the past two months, the BFJ team has been conducting stakeholder interviews with Town Departments, Boards, Commissions, and other groups, to gain insight into the existing conditions in Orange, as well as opportunities, challenges, and priorities for the next 10 years. In-person and virtual stakeholder interviews have been conducted with the First Selectman, Finance Department, Fire Marshal, Police Department, Public Works Department, Building Department, Senior Center & Community Services Department, Board of Education, Orange Land Trust, Chamber of Commerce, and Conservation Commission. Preliminary key takeaways from these interviews include:

Theme	Details
Open Space & Sustainability	Open space conservation is a high priority.
	Desire to encourage sustainability and natural resource protection.
Infrastructure	Lack of sewer infrastructure limits development.
Transportation Management and Mobility	Areas of high crash rates generally due to speed and volume of vehicles.
	Sidewalks could enhance commercial areas and improve pedestrian safety, i.e., Boston Post Road.
	State routes require coordination with CT DOT to implement major traffic solutions.
Housing and Economic Development	Desire to balance open space, housing, and economic development.

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	Preserve existing single-family neighborhoods.
	Support the existing commercial areas and industrial parks.
Town Services	Increase in aging population has led to a need for services to support these residents.
	School system is a source of pride for the community.
	Town's buses and car service for seniors and disabled population is well utilized.

Orange Today

Mr. Fish then transitioned to an overview of key demographic statistics in Orange. These statistics include a modest increase in population and median household income from 2010 to 2020. In terms of race and ethnicity in the town, as of 2020, 80.5% of the Orange population is White, 10.4% is Asian, 6.1% is Black or African American, and 2.4% is Hispanic or Latino (of any race). Lastly, Mr. Fish highlighted the presence of an aging population in Orange, stating that the median age is 45 years, older than the New Haven County median age of 40.8 years, and 25% of the population is 55 years+.

Transportation

Mark Freker of BFJ Planning presented two maps showing transportation information for the Town of Orange. The first map highlighted State Routes, including I-95, Route 1, Route 15, Route 34, Route 114, Route 121, and Route 152. The presence of State Routes may require Town coordination with Connecticut DOT for any future improvements. Mr. Freker then presented a map showing Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) townwide. This is critical in analyzing traffic flow and areas of high usage. Mr. Freker explained that BFJ plans to examine traffic safety within the town by conducting a crash analysis.

Lastly, Mr. Freker discussed next steps for the project, stating that the project team will be launching an online survey in early 2025 to gather input on proposed POCD goals. BFJ will then develop recommendations and draft POCD chapters, which will be presented for community feedback at the second Public Workshop.

Interactive Visioning Exercise

Mr. Fish introduced the interactive visioning exercise, inviting attendees to leave feedback on the boards around the room, which show goals from the 2015 POCD. Community members were tasked with adding green dots to goals they agreed with, red dots to goals they disagreed with, and comments on sticky notes for any further feedback. Photos of the boards are included at the end of this document.



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Question-and-Answer Session

The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session for attendees. The questions and comments are summarized here.

- An attendee asked what the function of this plan will be.
 - Mr. Fish explained that is plan has several purposes, including the ability to guide decisions at the state and regional level. It also sets the stage for the Town's capital budget and future zoning changes.
 - A member of the P & Z stated that the Commission's actions and decisions on applications are intended to be consistent with this advisory document.
- A member of the public suggested that the POCD look at strategies for reducing carbon emissions, i.e. through electric buses and solar panels.
- An attendee added that LED lights can also help with energy reduction.
- A member of the public advocated for continued open space protection. They would like to ensure that golf courses and farmland will be conserved if these properties go up for sale.
- An attendees stated that they would like to see more recent data than the 2020 census for the existing conditions section, since the town has experienced development and changes from COVID since then.
 - Mr. Fish stated that the decennial census is more accurate, but BFJ can add 2024 data from the ACS, with an understanding that it is typically developed from a smaller sample size.
- A member of the P&Z concluded the meeting by encouraging members of the public to spread the word about the POCD process to community members and share the upcoming survey online.



What is your vision for the Orange 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)?

2015 POCD Goals

Agree / Disagree

Comments?

Housing & Residential Development

- Protect residential neighborhoods by maintaining the equality, livability, and character of the community. ☒ ☒ ☒

- Encourage conservation design of subdivisions to preserve open space. ☐

- Consider ways to help address the housing needs of an aging population. ☒ ☒

- Consider ways to provide a diverse housing stock. ☐

Business & Economic Development

- Continue to promote a vibrant economic base and encourage well-planned development in the "economic area." ☒

- Simplify the current business zoning configuration to help guide business development. ☒

- Enhance overall pedestrian circulation in business areas. ☒

Transportation

- Maintain a safe and efficient road system by improving dangerous intersections. ☒

- Do you prioritize sidewalks? ☒

- Are bicycle lanes important? ☒

- Strive to create an open space system with public access and trails. ☒ ☒

Utility Infrastructure

- Improve storm drainage. ☒

- Continue the use of septic systems in most areas. ☒ ☒ ☒

- Promote "sewer avoidance" in most areas. ☒ ☒

- Encourage extension of natural gas service. ☒ ☒



What is your vision for the Orange 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)?

2015 POCD Goals

Agree / Disagree

Comments?

Natural Resources & Open Space

- Protect important natural resources (i.e., watercourses, wetlands, sensitive habitats).
- Continue open space preservation efforts and strive to convert private open space into dedicated open space owned by the Town or land trust.



Sustainability & Resiliency

- Promote sustainability through energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction, and education.
- Promote resiliency by improving hazard mitigation and emergency management plans.



Community Character & Historic Preservation

- Encourage farmland preservation and preserve undeveloped land.
- Protect historic resources and increase awareness through signage.
- Promote architectural character as part of new development.
- Continue Orange's historic structure with a "living area" and an "economic area."



Community Facilities & Services

- Plan for future Town Hall expansion.
- Evaluate consolidation of education facilities.
- Maintain effective fire department, police, and medical response capabilities.
- Maintain and improve outdoors recreational facilities and the community center.
- Address space needs for public works activities.





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Agree / Disagree

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- Promote sustainability through energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction, and education. ☒
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Community Character & Historic Preservation

- Encourage farmland preservation and preserve undeveloped land. ☒
- Protect historic resources and increase awareness through signage. ☒
- Promote architectural character as part of new development. ☒ ☒
- Continue Orange's historic structure with a "living area" and an "economic area." ☒

Community Facilities & Services

- Plan for future Town Hall expansion. ☐
- Evaluate consolidation of education facilities. ☐
- Maintain effective fire department, police, and medical response capabilities. ☒
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Agree / Disagree

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- Protect residential neighborhoods by maintaining the equality, livability, and character of the community.
- Encourage conservation design of subdivisions to preserve open space.
- Consider ways to help address the housing needs of an aging population.
- Consider ways to provide a diverse housing stock.



Business & Economic Development

- Continue to promote a vibrant economic base and encourage well-planned development in the "economic area."
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- Enhance overall pedestrian circulation in business areas.



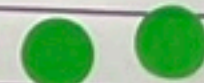
Transportation

- Maintain a safe and efficient road system by improving dangerous intersections.
- Do you prioritize sidewalks?
- Are bicycle lanes important?
- Strive to create an open space system with public access and trails.



Utility Infrastructure

- Improve storm drainage.
- Continue the use of septic systems in most areas.
- Promote "sewer avoidance" in most areas.
- Encourage extension of natural gas service.





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Comments?

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Sustainability & Resiliency

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- Promote resiliency by improving hazard mitigation and emergency management plans. ☐

REDUCE
CARBON
EMISSIONS
- Electric sources
- Solar panels

Community Character & Historic Preservation

- Encourage farmland preservation and preserve undeveloped land. ☒ ☒
- Protect historic resources and increase awareness through signage. ☒
- Promote architectural character as part of new development. ☒
- Continue Orange's historic structure with a "living area" and an "economic area." ☒

Community Facilities & Services

- Plan for future Town Hall expansion. ☐
- Evaluate consolidation of education facilities. ☒
- Maintain effective fire department, police, and medical response capabilities. ☒ ☒
- Maintain and improve outdoors recreational facilities and the community center. ☒ ☒
- Address space needs for public works activities. ☒



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Business & Economic Development

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Transportation

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- Do you prioritize sidewalks? ☐
- Are bicycle lanes important? ☐
- Strive to create an open space system with public access and trails. ☒

Look into traffic calming on Dogwood Rd (no - 11-14 Park)

As traffic increases on major roadways traffic to 34 + Route 1 spills onto Dogwood Rd creating increased traffic and speeds

Consider speed humps on Dogwood Rd

Better transit services for senior citizens + folks with disabilities

Utility Infrastructure

- Improve storm drainage.
- Continue the use of septic systems in most areas. ☒
- Promote "sewer avoidance" in most areas. ☒
- Encourage extension of natural gas service. ☒



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- Protect residential neighborhoods by maintaining the equality, livability, and character of the community. ●
- Encourage conservation design of subdivisions to preserve open space.
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- Consider ways to provide a diverse housing stock.

Business & Economic Development

- Continue to promote a vibrant economic base and encourage well-planned development in the "economic area." ● ● ●
- Simplify the current business zoning configuration to help guide business development. ●
- Enhance overall pedestrian circulation in business areas. ●

Transportation

- Maintain a safe and efficient road system by improving dangerous intersections. ●
- Do you prioritize sidewalks? ●
- Are bicycle lanes important? ● ●
- Strive to create an open space system with public access and trails. ● ●

Sidewalks on Route 1
Rte 54 + 114
Intersection - Safety needs improved
Rte 54 + Appleton Rd
Orange Rock - Bridge - Appleton Road intersection needs improved

Utility Infrastructure

- Improve storm drainage.
- Continue the use of septic systems in most areas.
- Promote "sewer avoidance" in most areas. ●
- Encourage extension of natural gas service. ● ● ●



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Very important for the water aquifers/wells

Sustainability & Resiliency

- Promote sustainability through energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction, and education.



- Promote resiliency by improving hazard mitigation and emergency management plans.



Community Character & Historic Preservation

- Encourage farmland preservation and preserve undeveloped land.



- Protect historic resources and increase awareness through signage.



- Promote architectural character as part of new development.



- Continue Orange's historic structure with a "living area" and an "economic area."



Farm Land / Town Character

Community Facilities & Services

- Plan for future Town Hall expansion.



- Evaluate consolidation of education facilities.



- Maintain effective fire department, police, and medical response capabilities.



- Maintain and improve outdoors recreational facilities and the community center.



- Address space needs for public works activities.



Need for year-round Rec Facilities